

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 and 37-42 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 17-36 and 43-50 are withdrawn, and claims 1 and 10 are amended. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The drawings are objected to because of a typographical error in Fig. 8. A replacement drawing sheet is provided that corrects the typographical error in Fig. 8. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 13 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

In particular, a plurality of image output devices in claims 13 and 14 are connected to a network. Accordingly, the location of the plurality of image output devices is clearly understood to be over a network, as indicated in Fig. 1 and in the specification at, for example, page 57, line 20 – page 58, line 5. Thus, claims 13 and 14 distinctly claim the subject matter. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over Shibusawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,088,120); claims 4, 7-16 and 37-42 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over Yamamoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,553,431); and claims 5 and 6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Yamamoto in view of Shibusawa. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

In particular, Shibusawa fails to disclose or suggest a method of displaying a screen for operating a plurality of image output devices that includes displaying a screen with selectable attributes based on the result of a logical operation, as recited in independent claim 1.

Shibusawa teaches a printer managing apparatus that includes a physical printer managing unit for managing the outputting of the attribute information of individual physical

printers and controlling the outputting of a job to the physical printers (Abstract). In Shibusawa, a plurality of printers are presented as one printer to the user, and a printer condition decision means 23 decides whether the output capabilities of printers satisfy the conditions (Fig. 5; col. 6, lines 45-47). Moreover, Shibusawa teaches that a grouping control means 24 groups printers together that satisfy the conditions (Fig. 5; col. 6, lines 48-53), and a printer presentation control means 25 presents users with a group of printers (Fig. 5; col. 6, lines 19-29). However, Shibusawa only teaches that a group of printers are presented to the user, but does not disclose or suggest that selectable attributes of the image output devices are displayed, as recited in independent claim 1. Thus, independent claim 1, and its dependent claims, are patentable over Shibusawa. Support for this feature can be found in the specification at, for example, page 79, lines 19-22.

Furthermore, for the reasons discussed below, independent claims 4, 7, 9-17, 37 and 39-42, and their dependent claims, are patentable over Yamamoto.

Yamamoto teaches input and output devices form a device profile, and a host computer acquires virtual input/output device information including a pair of ideal input and output devices on the basis of the device profiles of these devices (Abstract). As such, Yamamoto teaches an information processing system that transfers input data directly to an output device without passing through a host computer (col. 12, lines 54-58), and the virtual input/output device information and transfer path profiles are saved in a file server (Fig. 8). Thus, when input/output image data is carried out, an input device demands virtual input/output device information, and if the input device acquires virtual input/output device information, the input device demands a transfer path profile (Fig. 8; col. 9, line 55 – col. 10, line 36). Accordingly, when the input device acquires the transfer path profile, the input device demands the output device to establish a connection, and if the connection is established, then the information registered in the transfer path is reflected on a device setting

of the input device, data input is performed and the input data is transferred to the output device (Fig. 12; col. 11, line 50 – col. 12, line 49).

Thus, as discussed above, Yamamoto transfers data from the input device directly to the output device without passing through the host computer. Thus, Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest an image input device for use in an image output system wherein an image output managing device transmits an operation screen generating signal to generate an operation screen for displaying attribute information, to plural image output devices, as recited in independent claim 4, and similarly recited in independent claims 7 and 9. Also, Yamamoto teaches a profile ID of the device profile of the input device that is inputted at a console panel 9 (col. 9, lines 7-17). However, Yamamoto fails to disclose or suggest that the display input device displays the operation screen for displaying the attribute information of the output devices, as recited in independent claim 4, and similarly recited in independent claims 7 and 9. Also, Yamamoto teaches that plural device profiles of the input devices are displayed (Figs. 27a and 27b), and when one of the profiles is selected, device profiles of the output devices which are capable of performing output processing and which are searched based on the selected device profile of the input device are displayed (col. 21, lines 27-32). Accordingly, Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest that a first operation screen for displaying attribute information common to plural image output devices satisfying a designating condition, and a second operation screen for displaying all the attribute information of the plural image output devices satisfying the designated condition, as recited in independent claim 4, and similarly recited in independent claims 7 and 9.

Yamamoto teaches that output devices capable of performing output processing are displayed on a GUI. However, Yamamoto does not display attribute information of the image output devices, as recited in independent claim 10. Thus, independent claim 10 is patentable over Yamamoto.

As discussed above, Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest an image output managing device that checks the status of the image output devices and transmits a signal for generating an operation screen on the basis of only attribute information of each one of the image output devices available for image output, as recited in independent claim 11, and similarly recited in independent claims 13 and 15. Furthermore, for the same reasons, Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest an image output managing device that does not check the status of the image output devices before generating the operation screen but does check after information is inputted from the operation screen of the display input device, as recited in independent claim 12, and similarly recited in independent claims 14 and 16.

Yamamoto teaches a definition path profile acquirement demand instruction of selected input and output devices that is transmitted, and information of the transfer path of selected input and output devices is demanded (col. 20, lines 1-4; step S95 in Fig. 21). Thus, the output device in Yamamoto is already selected in step S94, and as such Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest searching for image output devices, as recited in independent claim 37. Moreover, Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest grouping the searched image output devices, as recited in independent claim 37 because Yamamoto's output devices are not grouped.

Because Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest an output managing device, as discussed above, and because Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest searching and grouping image output devices, Yamamoto does not disclose or suggest searching output devices and registering the output devices as a group, as recited in independent claim 39, and similarly recited in independent claims 40-42.

Finally, at least for the reasons discussed above, a combination of Yamamoto and Shibusawa would not arrive at the subject matter of dependent claims 5 and 6, including the limitations of independent claim 4.

For at least these reasons, independent claims 1, 4, 7, 9-16, 37 and 39-42, and their dependent claims, are patentable over a combination of the applied references. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) and 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-16 and 37-42 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:TMN/amw

Attachment:
Replacement Sheet

Date: March 28, 2006

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<p>DEPOSIT ACCOUNT USE AUTHORIZATION Please grant any extension necessary for entry; Charge any fee due to our Deposit Account No. 15-0461</p>
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Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached replacement drawing sheet makes changes to Fig. 8 and replaces the original sheet with Fig. 8.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet